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Weekly Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

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3 April 1974

Fifty-Seventh Report

WEEKLY SURVEY OF COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA*

(This report covers the period
from 27 March through 2 April 1974)

The Key Points

- Infiltration of new troops continued at a high rate last week as five regular groups (2,500 troops) en route to COSVN and one group (500 troops) destined for VC MR 5 were detected. About 1,600 specialists also started south last week -- the largest number since last September.
- The systematic northbound flow of Communist personnel from forward areas continues at a record rate. In addition, recent communications have disclosed Hanoi's intent to reinfiltrate rehabilitated personnel to South Vietnam.
- Logistic activity around Vinh, North Vietnam, was light, but truck traffic in Laos and South Vietnam was heavy during the week.
- Recent analysis shows that since the beginning of the year some 65,000 tons of materiel, half of it ordnance, have been detected moving in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

[Redacted]

Preface

This report is the fifty-seventh in a series summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant Communist combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

DETAILS

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

Personnel Infiltration

1. The rate of troop infiltration to South Vietnam remained high last week. During the period, five regular groups with some 2,500 troops en route to COSVN and one group with 500 troops destined for MR 5 were detected starting south from Binh Tram 8 near Vinh, North Vietnam. On the basis of the designation of several of the COSVN-bound groups, five additional groups which have not yet been detected also are believed to be moving toward that area with an estimated strength of 2,500 troops and are included in the following table. In addition, 29 special-purpose groups were initially detected in the infiltration system. These groups, most of which are destined for COSVN and MR 5, have a strength of about 1,600 personnel – the highest number of specialists detected in a one-week period thus far during the 1973/74 infiltration cycle. Seven of the groups were identified as being from North Vietnam's Central Reunification Committee, the government organization involved with the infiltration and exfiltration of personnel.

**Comparative Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 2 April**

	1972-73	1973-74
Total	85,000	76,500
MR Tri-Thien	26,000	2,000
MR 5	9,000	8,500
B-3 Front	14,000	8,500
COSVN	25,000	35,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	22,500

2. The northbound flow of personnel from forward areas in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos continues at a record rate. Thus far in 1974, more than 36,000 exfiltrators, including 23,000 sick and wounded, have been observed moving through North Vietnam, compared with about 45,000 for all of 1973. Moreover, there is mounting evidence that the North

Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

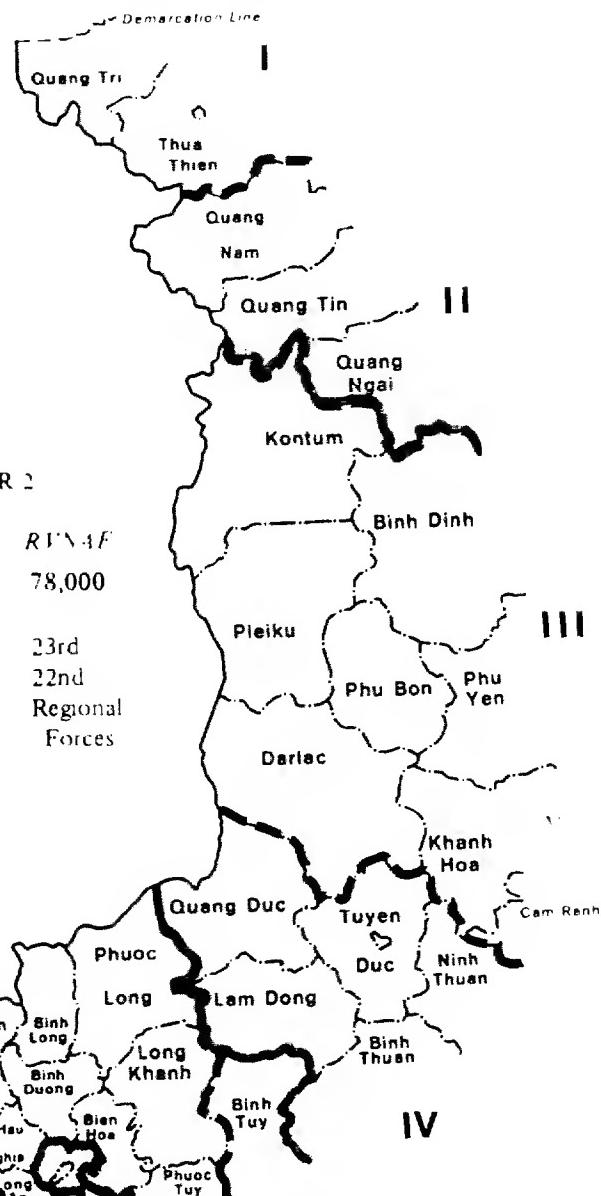
1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.
 2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.
 3. Only one infantry regiment subordinate to the division.

MR 3

FCVNA	RVNAF
39,000	94,000
9th	25th
7th	18th
5th	5th
377th AAA	Regional
429th Sap Cmd	Forces
69th Arty Cmd	

MR 4

<i>VC/NVA</i>	<i>RINAF</i>
22,000	97,000
1st ³	21st
	9th
	7th
	Regional



Military region boundary

Province boundary

ICCS region boundary

25 50 75 Miles

5 50 75 Kilometers

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Vietnamese are systematizing the northward flow of personnel. Since January, intercepted messages have revealed the use of group-numbering similar to that used for designating infiltration groups, a phenomenon not previously observed. Moreover, sick and wounded personnel are separated from other exfiltrators in North Vietnam and placed in newly developed medical facilities or moved north through the workcamp system. Healthy personnel, on the other hand, continue their journey at least through Vinh via the same communications-liaison stations used by southward-moving infiltrators. This separation probably reflects both the increasing sophistication of North Vietnam's infiltration/exfiltration network and the added burden of processing the large numbers of infiltrators seen during the past several months.

3. Recent communications have disclosed Hanoi's intent to reinfiltrate rehabilitated personnel to South Vietnam. Although it seems likely that the practice has been occurring over the years, this is the first confirmation of such activity.

Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies

North Vietnam

4. Logistic activity in the Vinh area was light for the third consecutive week, although fairly heavy activity was noted farther south in the Panhandle. The only significant activity near Vinh occurred on 27 March, when 42 vehicles with some 140 tons of ammunition were sent from the Cho Si Railroad Station to northern Laos. The absence of sustained activity at the top of the logistic pipeline since early March suggests that the North Vietnamese may be concentrating on moving the supplies they have in the system through to their final destination, rather than shipping new materiel. Weather and road conditions near Vinh remain good, however, and the North Vietnamese are capable of resuming heavy supply shipments through this area whenever they desire.

5. Between Quang Khe and the DMZ, most of the logistic activity during the week involved almost daily barge shipments, most of which carry some 70-80 tons of cargo. Although small ordnance shipments also were detected, most of the cargo shipped was foodstuffs. On 30 March, one of the logistic units involved reported having some 340 tons of food -- but only about 45 tons of ammunition -- still awaiting shipment.

Laos

6. Although aerial reconnaissance of the main Communist supply corridor in Laos was again generally limited during the week, two photographic missions [redacted] provided good coverage from Tchepone

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to the tri-border area, which showed heavy traffic. More than 250 southbound trucks were seen on the missions - the highest number observed moving since February. COMINT also provided evidence of large vehicle convoys:

[redacted] more than 300 trucks had been sent from an unspecified storage area, but no breakdown of cargo type was given.

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7. [redacted] aerial reconnaissance of the main supply corridor in Laos has indicated that, although the roadbed reflected the movement of large vehicle convoys through the Panhandle, on most days fewer than 50 trucks were actually observed moving.

[redacted] it has been difficult to measure the level of activity from Tchepone to the tri-border area during the month.

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[redacted] the level of logistic activity in the Laotian Panhandle in March probably was comparable to that in the January-February period, when several hundred trucks were moving daily.

South Vietnam

8. Aerial reconnaissance [redacted] showed that Route 9 remained in good condition and was sustaining heavy traffic. The largest convoy was observed [redacted] when 43 trucks were seen heading east near Khe Sanh. In addition, numerous 10-20 truck convoys were observed heading both east and west along the route during the week, in what was apparently a steady stream of traffic. Along the Communists' western supply corridor, some light to moderate truck traffic was noted from the A Shau Valley south to Kontum Province, most of which was apparently related to construction activity along the corridor (see Section III).

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II. Significant Communist Combat Activity

9. Communist cease-fire violations continued to rise last week, with a daily average of 112 incidents in comparison with the previous week's 93. This rate surpasses the 1973 average of 100 violations per day. Casualties on both sides also remained above the 1973 levels of 28 for the ARVN and 99 for the Communists, with Communist dead stable at 111, while South Vietnamese losses increased from 32 to 44 per day. Most major clashes occurred in MR 3 and were associated with the concerted Communist ground and artillery attacks on the ARVN ranger base of Due Hue in Hau Nghia Province. MR 4 continues to register the majority of total violations, which consisted primarily of limited attacks-by-fire, ground probes, and harassing actions.

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III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Heavy Logistic Activity in Quang Tri Province in 1974

10. The Communists are moving large quantities of supplies within northern South Vietnam. Recent analysis shows that since the beginning of the year roughly 65,000 tons of materiel — about half of it ordnance — have been either moving through or stored in the 541st Engineer Regiment's area of Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. This regiment is responsible for moving supplies westward along Route 9 from Dong Ha into Laos and also southward along Communist Route 14 in South Vietnam to an area just north of A Luoi.

11. Most of the supplies probably are destined for units throughout South Vietnam, although small quantities may also be sent to Laos and Cambodia. The amount of ordnance handled during the past few months is sufficient to meet Communist requirements throughout South Vietnam for several years at the current level of hostilities and for more than a year of combat at the level of the Easter Offensive of 1972.

12. Most of the cargo detected in the 541st Regiment's area probably is materiel delivered this dry season from North Vietnam through Dong Ha or overland by truck. During the past few months, the Communists have shipped some 10,000 tons of cargo, mostly foodstuffs, through Dong Ha. Overland shipments through the North Vietnamese Panhandle to South Vietnam also have been heavy in recent months, as a steady flow of ordnance has been detected moving southward through Vinh. Finally, part of the cargo handled by this regiment since January may have been stored in northern Quang Tri Province last dry season.

13. The detection of such a large quantity of munitions in northern Quang Tri Province undoubtedly reflects the Communists' desire to maintain large stockpiles in their rear base areas of South Vietnam, rather than to depend on extended supply lines from North Vietnam. Traditionally, the North Vietnamese have attempted to maintain large stockpiles of ordnance regardless of the level of fighting.

Recent Communist Construction Activities in Laos and South Vietnam

14. [redacted] aerial reconnaissance showed continued improvement of Communist infiltration corridors in South Vietnam and southern Laos. With most of the basic construction of the two new supply routes now complete, emphasis during March focused on route refinements and the building of new permanent logistic facilities. The pace of construction activity

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accelerated noticeably along Communist Route 14, leading south along the western border of South Vietnam. Now that the route is dried out from the monsoon rains, road crews and bulldozers are upgrading the road alignment, especially the segment recently opened between the Dak Pek Bypass and Dak To in Kontum Province.

15. Photography also showed that most of the road junctions along Route 14 are being developed into large logistic centers. New excavation and bulldozer clearing of roadside areas at Ta Bat (Route 547 junction), A Sap (Gorinan's Road junction), A So (Route 614 junction), Ben Giang (South Vietnamese Route 14 junction), and at Kham Due (Routes 534 and 1404 junction) indicate that each junction will be a major support depot for Communist base areas west of Route 14.

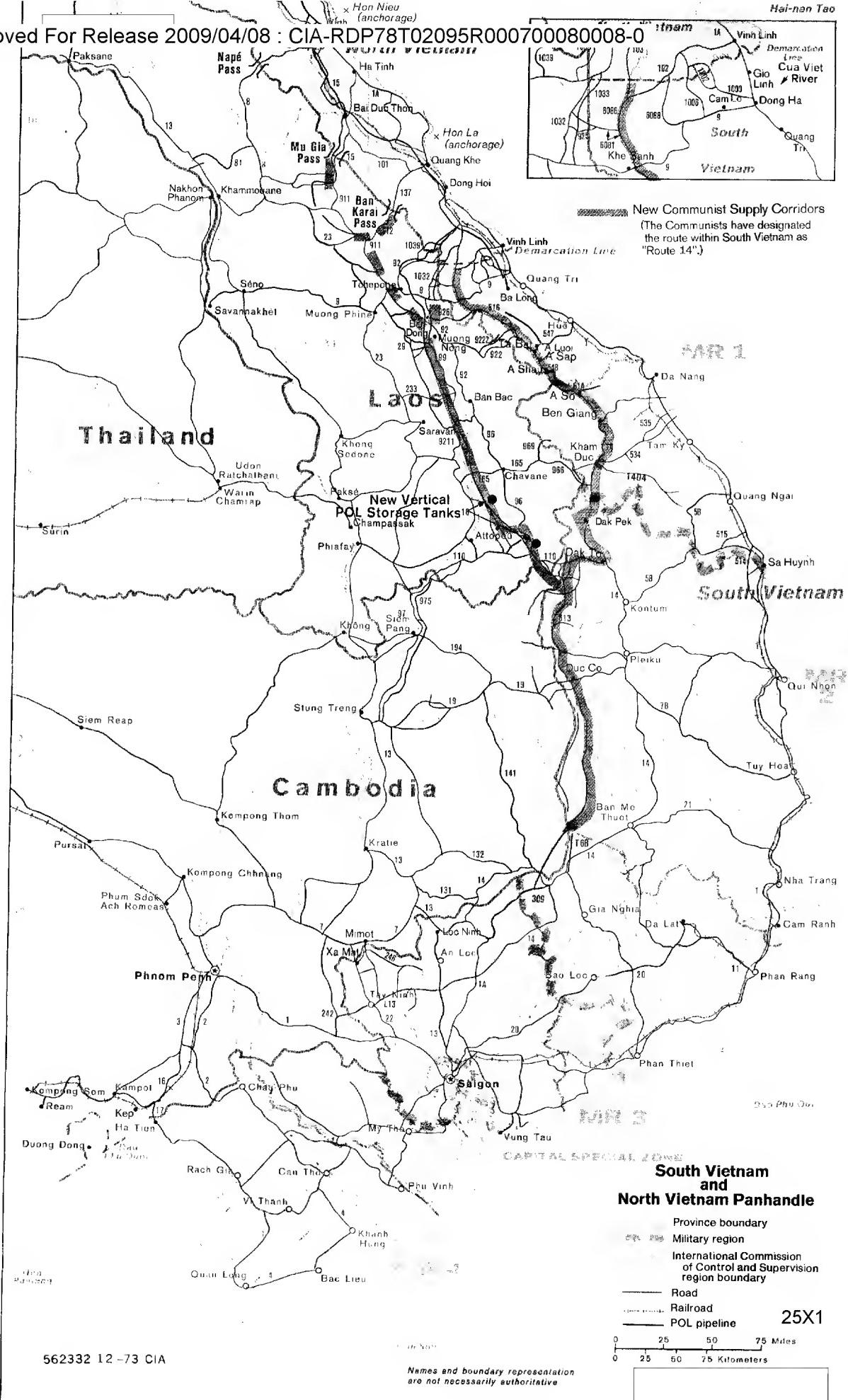
16. Extension and improvement of the Communist petroleum pipeline systems paralleling each of the new supply corridors also were noted. Along the relatively more secure Laotian corridor, the North Vietnamese are shifting to the use of more permanent vertical storage tanks in place of smaller, often-buried horizontal containers. The new 36-foot-diameter vertical tanks are located in the vicinity of the tri-border area (see the transportation map), suggesting that the tri-border area will be developed into a large permanent logistic base supporting North Vietnamese interests in southern Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. Along Route 14, work crews continue to lay new pipeline southward through the A Shau Valley and to build new petroleum storage tanks. Additions to existing storage areas and the new roadside storage facilities are still being buried and revetted, reflecting Communist concern about possible air attack. The newest facility is located 10 miles south of the A Shau airstrip and contains some 11 large horizontal storage tanks and excavations for six others.

Cambodian Air Force Attack on Communist Storage Area

17. On 24 March the Cambodian Air Force launched an apparently highly successful 15-plane strike against a large Communist storage area about 95 miles northeast of Phnom Penh. Aerial observers reported smoke rising to 6,000 feet, flames to 1,500 feet, and sustained secondary explosions for 30 minutes after the strike, suggesting that major damage was inflicted on the 2,000 barrels of oil and several hundred crates of unidentified materiel located in the target area.

18. The potential impact of this raid on Communist operations cannot be assessed because of uncertainties surrounding the quantity of supplies destroyed and their intended end-user - the Khmer or Vietnamese Communists. Nonetheless, the operation holds some portent for the Cambodian Air Force. Because the ambitious raid deep in Communist-controlled territory was the first of its kind, and tight security

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was maintained, complete surprise and a total absence of opposing ground fire were achieved. Moreover, the raid demonstrated continuing improvement in the planning and execution of air operations and a nascent ability to exploit intelligence information.

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ANNEX**INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL
TO THE SOUTH**

Since the implementation of the cease-fire settlement for South Vietnam on 27 January 1973, more than 141,000 North Vietnamese troops and specialists have infiltrated southward. Over 116,000 of this total have started south since that time. Since 15 June 1973, when the original accord was reaffirmed, more than 90,000 troops and specialists have been sent south. The following table shows the number of North Vietnamese troops starting south, by destination, since 1 January 1973.

**Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia
Since 1 January 1973¹**

	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri-Thien	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
Total 1973	48,000	14,000	15,500	14,000	26,500	118,000
Jan-Mar	12,000	5,500	4,000	5,000	1,000	27,500
Apr-Jun	1,000	....	....	7,000	1,500	9,500
Jul-Aug	....	....	3,000	....	1,500	4,500
Sep	....	....	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	....	....	....	....	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	1,000	....	....	5,500	7,500
Dec	3,500	1,000	....	....	....	4,500
1974						
Jan	10,000	3,000	....	....	...	13,000
Feb	5,500	1,500	1,500	....	....	8,500
Mar	12,000	2,000	4,500	....	....	18,500
Apr 1-2	3,000	....	500	....	....	3,500

1. Excluding special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.

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